



# YUVA BHARATI

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Īsvarogururātmeti mūrṭibhedavibhāgine  
Vyomavadvyāpta dehāya Dakṣiṇāmūrtaye namaḥ । ।

Sadāśivasamārambhām Śankarācāryamadhyamām  
Asmadācāryaparyantām vande guruparamparām । ।

To Śrī Dakṣiṇāmūrṭiḥ, who, undivided even as space, is the Lord, is the Guruḥ, is the Ātmā I offer my salutations.

I salute the lineage of teachers, the lineage which originates from the Lord Himself, which is sustained by Śankarācāryaḥ as the middle link, and which culminates with my own Guruḥ.

*Editorial*



*In Vivekananda Kendra, we are engaged in the work of “Man Making and Nation Building”. This is not just some aim that Kendra has chosen for itself, but it is the ordained work that is to be done by us. What is ordained work? In the evolution of mankind, India has to guide the world. We all know, in spite of so many invasions India has not gone into oblivion but she retains all her strength to come up again. The regeneration of this land is ordained. The very fact that we are born in this land, it becomes our duty to work for the regeneration of our motherland which will enable her to play the due role assigned by the Destiny.*

*Whenever the need arose, whenever there were challenges, the consciousness of the nation has brought forth the necessary organised efforts to take on the challenge and to take further the ordained mission of this land. Thus though Vivekananda Kendra came into existence formally on 7 January 1972, the beginning was much earlier. It was latent in the penance of Goddess Kanyakumari, it germinated in the meditation of Swami Vivekananda in 1892 on the Rock and it became evident in the efforts of Vivekananda Shila Smarak Samiti led by Mananeeya Eknathji. To make Vivekananda Kendra potent, we have to understand its purpose and function. While starting Vivekananda Kendra Mananeeya Eknathji explained,*

*“People of our country are, by tradition, religion-minded and this country is therefore described as a land of religion and spirituality. Swami Vivekananda used to say that the soul of our country is in religion.”*

*Thus regeneration of India is possible by religious awakening. But what does religious awakening mean? To explain that he further says, "If going to temples, visiting places of pilgrimage, participating in Bhajans, Yajnas and Anusthanas as also listening to philosophical and religious discourses by millions of people, or the presence of numerous religious teachers, gurus and such other men of God all over the country are the manifestations of a growing religiosity, our country is, perhaps, more religious today than it ever was at any time in the past.*

*But, unfortunately, the natural impact of this apparent God-wardness of the general society is little in evidence today. Purposeful living, discipline, character, truthfulness, fellow-feeling, fearlessness, subordination of the self and a zest for works of public good, which are some of the traits that develop in a God-ward society and which, we have enough evidence to say, existed in good measure in our country in the past, are seen fast disappearing from our midst.*

*So, what is wrong with us and what is the way to save the country from the impending social disintegration that seems to be fast overtaking us? Any discerning mind will be able to see that a distorted conception of religion is the root cause of most of our ills for the last several centuries, which persist even today. It is rightly said that religion is the soul of our country. But, as that itself is blurred, we have the sorry spectacle of deterioration all round.*

*Religious awakening means experiencing the presence of God in one's own self and in the world. That makes one conscious of the divine within and urges him to work for its unfoldment and enables him to grow spiritually. Simultaneously, it generates in him a sense of oneness with God's creation and, consequently, an intense fellow-feeling for the members of his own species – the human race – and prompts him to work with zest for human welfare and progress...*

*If, and as long as, the religious awakening intensifies on these lines, it is dynamic and full of tremendous potentialities for the transformation of humanity into higher and higher planes of existence. But, if it remains limited to rituals, forms of worship and offerings to God, or prayers and praises addressed to Him, it becomes static and has hardly any role to play in human advancement.*

*Swami Vivekananda was the foremost among the modern religious teachers who strove to take out religion from that static condition into which it had degenerated over the centuries, and drew the attention of the people to its real role. He pointed out in no uncertain terms that ceremonies and forms are not the essence of religion but that it lies rather in the realisation of*

*a higher life... To those who lost themselves only in forms and rituals, turning their back on the people and the misery that had befallen them, he said, 'What vain gods shall we go after and yet cannot worship the god that we see all around us, the Virat (Janata Janardan)? When we have worshipped this, we shall be able to worship all other gods.'*

*The remedy for the ills of our country, therefore, lies in launching a mighty movement of right thought sweeping the entire country. It has to be a two-pronged move. On the one hand, it is to be aimed at (1) transforming our people's inherent God-wardness into the right spiritual urge rising out of the teachings of the Upanishads, namely, (a) each soul is potentially divine and (b) faith in God, in turn means faith in one's self, i.e. in one's potentiality to rise to divine heights. On the other hand, it is (2) to convert the spiritual fervour thus released into works of national reconstruction"*

*"The movement described above came into being in 1972, and the name it bears is VIVEKANANDA KENDRA. ...The time is now ripe; and the present conditions also demand that enlightened people of this country yoke themselves to these ideals and rouse the masses to intense activity towards national reconstruction. The coming into being of the Vivekananda Kendra is only an expression of that deep urge felt in the country."*

*Thus the work of Kendra is to put forward the vibrant, dynamic, relevant meaning and practice of Dharma (religion as is generally translated in English). Dharma or spirituality is in the blood of our people. As time changes, new challenges need to be met, then a relevant understanding and interpretation of eternal principle, Vedic principle is required. Faith in God is faith in one's own divine nature, that is faith in one's capacity to rise to the divine heights. Such a person would have tremendous self-confidence, self-control to walk unhesitatingly on the path of National regeneration. His life would be an expression of excellence and feeling of oneness and concern for all. To mould such men who would take up the work of national regeneration is necessary as India has to come up to guide the world. This is Divine work. We do not have to pray God to send floods, earth-quakes so as to be able to do service to the mankind. The service that we do in Vivekananda Kendra is to awaken the divinity in man and channelise it into service of our nation, because strong and spiritual India would be helpful in guiding the whole mankind. Yoga Shastra – the yoga way of life can manifest the divinity in man. Therefore, Mananeeya Eknathji chose Yoga as the core of Vivekananda Kendra.*

*In this Ishwariya – Karya, the guide, the ideal for us is Ishwara. Mananeeya Eknathji, therefore, did not establish himself or even Swami Vivekananda as the Guru of Vivekananda Kendra. Any specific name or form of God also would have brought limitations on our*

capacity for representing the whole society. Therefore, Mananeeya Eknathji has seen to it that Omkar- the most effective Pratika of Ishwara would be the guide for us in Ishwariya Karya. All the forms and the names – Namrupa – come from Omkar. Omkar indicates the inter-connectedness, inter-relatedness, inter-dependence of the existence.

As the existence is inter-connected, inter-related, inter-dependent, human life for sustained development and happiness would have to be based on these principles. The social order has to be based on Vision of Oneness. As Swamiji put it, it should be Vedanta in practice. That is what 'Yoga way of life' is. Yoga is not just some physical or breathing exercises but yoga is living a life in which we perceive the oneness and also employ our body-mind complex in the service of the Divine which has expressed as family, society, nation and the whole creation. This is Omkara Upasana too– to see the whole universe as the expression of that vibration Omkara.

Thus, when we say that Omkara is our Guru it means we see divinity in each and everything and learn from each and everything as Dattatreya had done. To uplift and elevate our life every moment, to see that which unites all the diversities (Avibhaktam Vibhakteshu...), to feel the Formless beyond all forms and serve the divinity expressed in Samashti is the Sadhana. In this Sadhana, our Guru is Omkar. Omkara means all inclusiveness, affirmation, acceptance and merging. It is said that the life of the disciple should be the expression of the essence of Guru's teachings. Thus, our life should be the expression of Omkara tattva. Omkara is integration of a, u and ma; of birth, sustenance and destruction; of wakefulness, dream and sleep; of jivatma, universe and god; and yet Omkara is beyond these threes (triputi). Therefore, Omkara upasana means integration and transcendence. It means one helps in all aspects of work and yet he/she sees only the divine beyond and thus remains unaffected by the success or failures. In Kendra Prayer Eknathji uses the word 'Punyakaryam' which means the work that purifies the doer as well as those for whom it is performed. The above said omkara upasana makes the social service as spiritual sadhana, practice of Yoga and Punyakarya.

Traditionally, Gurupurnima is celebrated on Vedavyasa Jayanti. Due the change of times and voluminous richas of Vedas it had become difficult to commit it to memory by a single person. Therefore, Vyasa edited Vedas in various branches and devised a system for the protection of the Vedas. He assigned different branches of Vedas to different disciples who were to continue these in their family traditions in coming generations. It is because of Vyasa that our Vedic knowledge survived and also the importance of Guru-tradition got established. Thus this is a day to remember all the Gurus who have contributed in

*continuation and propagation of the Vedic principles. Actually when we bow down to Omkara as Guru we are paying our obeisance to all the Gurus in our culture. Paying our obeisance to Guru on the day of Gurupurnima also means that like Vedavyasa we shall work to protect our culture in changed times and also by work shall devise a system which is self-propelled – a system that can sustain and drive itself toward the goal.*

*Gurupurnima should strengthen our resolve and also using the opportunity to motivate our friends to become active workers for the nationalist cause. Thus the occasion should reflect the solemnity, clarity and also divine touch to make deep impressions on the mind of the masses – to awaken them to the real issues faced by our society and energize them to work for it.*

**B.Nivedita**

# GURU BHAKTI

Swami Mitrananda

Just think of Hindu culture without the Brahmasutras, without the Bhagawad Gita and the Mahabharata, without the 18 Puranas, without puja vidhi, and the Vedas in the written form. We will draw a blank. These are the very basis of all Hindu thought. Veda Vyasa compiled the Vedas, wrote the Mahabharata and the Puranas, and ensured that the highest Knowledge will be passed on through the ages. Hence, in gratitude, we commemorate Vyasa Jayanthi by dedicating it to the Guru parampara, and call it Guru Purnima – just as we celebrate Jawaharlal Nehru's birthday as Children's Day and Dr.Radhakrishnan's birthday as Teachers' Day. It is a very auspicious day, a very special day, for all spiritual seekers in particular.

Even for small favours and the least bit of help – when someone shares our trouble or gives a direction when we are in a confused state of mind – we are very grateful. What then must be our gratitude to the person who makes our whole life meaningful, who gives a direction and a purpose to all our activities! Just think of your life without Gurudev. I find it very depressing; in fact, I can't even visualize it. If He had not come into my life, what would I have been! Without Him, most of us would have wasted our lives in the usual purposeless worldly pursuits. Because of His grace, compassion, direction and guidance, we are able at least to attempt to walk the spiritual path.

Sri Tulsidasji says in Vibhishana Gita, “kavaca veda vipra guru puja – worship of the Vedas, wise men and the Guru is our armour.” The kavaca that we wear, our armour, is devotion to the Guru—guru puja. Nothing can disturb us as long as that is there. As we become more and more sensitive to life and the various things that life offers, we start seeing the Guru's grace behind everything. This devotion is the shield that protects us. Once I met an old devotee of Gurudev and saw the letter he had written to her. “There are many people waiting for me to fall. Slip somewhere. But my hold on my Guru is such that they will be disappointed.” He says it with such confidence. That is the shield that all Masters have used, the strength that has protected them.

Since the Guru is in the human form, we are able to focus on him easily and bring all our attention to one place. All our love, all our emotions are channelised to that one point in reverence. Love, when directed to the Higher, becomes devotion. Generally people find it difficult to love God, because they have not seen Him, heard Him or experienced Him. This problem is solved when we learn to see God in the Guru. Very soon, with the Guru's grace and his teaching, we learn to see God in everything.

We must realise the presence of grace when things happen smoothly, for at every point they could have gone wrong otherwise. That grace is the shield that protects us. On Guru Purnima Day, if we can commit ourselves to the Guru, to his vision, and make a sincere effort to live our lives in tune with him, we will certainly attain the highest Goal.

There are two sides to our goal – firstly, we have to break free from our bondage and secondly, in our own small way, be instrumental for others to break their bondage. We must evolve and help others to evolve. If we can do these two, our life will be fulfilled. If this vision is clear to us and if our life is directed along these lines, our lives will certainly become more meaningful and we will be on the right royal highway to final Liberation....

In Guru Paduka Stotram, it is said that the Guru serves as the boat for us to cross the ocean of samsara. We live in ignorance; if we want to wake up, this kind of devotion is necessary. If we have this Guru bhakti, everything else will come. If we have everything else without Guru bhakti, it is of no use. Adi Sankaracharya says:

manascenna lagnam guroranghripadme  
tatah kim tatah kim tatah kim tatah kim.

We may have everything in the world – good health, prosperity, a loving family, name and fame, but of what use are these without devotion to the Guru? Even if we have nothing else but this Guru bhakti, everything else will come to us in time. Let us make a firm resolve on this auspicious day to pray with reverence to the Guru every day.

From: Tapovan Prasad, July 2007.



## GOD'S CHEMISTRY

*A drop of poison in a pot of amrita (nectar) may spoil the whole quantity of amrita. But several drops of amrita cannot change the quality of poison why? What is the logic in this chemistry of God? Why is evil more powerful than good? asked a disciple to his guru.*

*The guru answered him by explaining another phenomenon. A small flame of a lamp can remove all the darkness of a den. Darkness is also a personification of small evil. Is it not removed by a flame of fire? God has created that chemistry also.*

*Flame is a symbol of knowledge. With a little knowledge of righteousness any evil could be conquered.*



# Spiritual Leader and Religious Manager

Dr.K.Subrahmanyam

Leader is a visionary. Manager is a missionary. The former inspires and shows the goal; instils confidence and triggers off the fire of hidden potentialities. The latter sustains the inspiration, retains the inspired ones and makes the way for them to reach the goal; also, he strengthens the confidence and keeps the fire bright and blazing. Leader sees ahead of his times. Manager is often pinned to the present. Unvarying, unwavering and eternally truthful should be the vision of a leader. Managers are likely to be varied, flexible and relatively real while consolidating and coordinating the people and their activities towards the chosen ideal.

Leaders cannot afford to err or be ignoble. Nor can they be short-sighted. They have to be universal and flawless in their appeal and ideals. Managers are sometimes subjected to amendments, rectifications and improvements to be in tune with the lofty ideals of the master-leader. They also are likely to be regional and restricted to the current times while implementing the leader's policies. Spirituality is the leader; religion is the manager. The former draws us to the destination, the latter makes the way.

Deathless are the leaders shining in the firmament of eternal cosmos. Often, by their dazzling brightness they eclipse the managers. But, they invariably need managers to make their views realistic and practicable. Managers are not only eclipsed but replaced, and even dispensed with at a particular stage in the process of evolution or upward march towards perfection.

In the infinite space of open skies, leaders fly freely to lead all to the horizons of beatitude. They cannot but soar high. Nor do they want anybody to limp or lag behind. They love and strive to elevate all. Managers walk beneath on the runway, preventing side tracks and propelling our onward march for a take off to the chosen goals. They go step by step to gain momentum and to cope with the leader's expectations. Both leaders and managers are essential in any evolving society. Inspiring leaders and systematising managers make a nation or institution or organisation eternal and effective. Sometimes, for want of good follow up, leaders themselves have to play the role of managers as well. Similarly, now and then to drive out inertia, managers have to rise high and take the reins of leadership.

Between leaders and managers, the former are more essential for ennobling a society and enabling it to live long. Leaders embody a principle. Managers strive to follow their footprints. Leaders should be infallible. Managers should be resourceful.

Srutis are leaders. Smritis are managers.

# THE PATH OF BHAKTI

-

## TO WALK OR NOT TO.....

**C.Rangarajan**

This poor soul is in need of some help. I am torn between two paths and placing my thoughts in front of you. Have mercy and help me to choose the right path.

As I woke up this morning, my better half wants to know which path I am following. She is getting confused (Her alter ego is alternating between the path of Bhakti and Jnana very frequently) and today is the D-day to get a final answer. As usual, I had put myself in zombie state and avoided the question. But, it started the inner churning.

Initially I thought, Bhakti (devotion) is the way. Just consider this. The number of saints who reached the goal through bhakti is in hundreds, if not thousands. On the other hand, the number of jnanis can be counted on your fingers in one hand. The path of a bhakta is much simpler.

A bhakta's sadhana (spiritual practice) is seamlessly, effortlessly and joyously integrated into his everyday life. To wit, when he/she gets up in the morning, the very first act is to look at his hand and say the prayers for the deities, followed by a pranam (prostration) to the picture of his ishta devatha (chosen deity) kept by the bedside. Next, he washes his face, and lights the lamps in the pooja room while applying kumkum/vibhuti on the forehead thinking of his God all the time. He turns on the music player and goes about the morning chores while listening to Suprabhatham and other devotional music while getting ready for the day. While taking the bath, he chants the mantram offering abhishekam to his Isha Devatha residing in his body. This is followed by Sandhya/Gayatri (prayer for enlightenment, done 3 times daily). He goes to the garden, plucks the freshest flowers and offers to God during the puja. While eating his meal, he does parishesanam (purification ritual) and offers the food as a yajna (sacrificial) offering to the pranas that animate him. He prayerfully gets into his vehicle, again lovingly touching the little statue mounted on the dash before driving off to work. During the drive to work, he has music softly playing in the car reminding him of his Beloved. The whole day he spends at work with the name of his Love constantly on his lips.

When he returns home, he does his evening Sandhya, walks a good distance to the temple while doing Japa. He loses himself standing in front of the Lord in the temple and while doing the pradakshinam (circumambulation). When time permits, he also does bhajans with his family and friends. He spends the rest of the evening filling his note book with Sri Ramajayam or Namasivaya

(sacred names of Lord) until he retires for the night. The entire day, thoughts of his Beloved stays even closer to him than his own breath. He lies down in his bed, offers the daily activity to his god and does japa until sleep embraces him. Often, even in his sleep he dreams of his Beloved.

Contrast this to a 'Jnana' afficianodo. He sits in a corner for thirty or so minutes a day, fights with his mind trying to concentrate amidst all the distracting thoughts, muttering Soham, Soham (I am He) trying to ward off his worldly soham (grief or sorrow). The rest of the time, he makes great effort trying to convince others how effortless jnana is.

Which one would you rather practice? Loving bhakti or dry jnana? It will be a cake walk, if we stop ourselves at this stage. Before allowing you to come to a decision, I will add more fuel to your confusion.

Look at the typical bhakta's daily routine as exemplified in the lives of always and nayanmars. Their morning routine starts with sweeping, cleaning and washing the temples. Just imagine if you are living in Madurai or Srirangam and you have a lot of cleaning to do. With me, I have a difficult time keeping my virtual desktop clean, leave the physical desktop.

The cleaning routine is followed by tending to the Tulsi grove. I have a tulsi in my backyard and the one tiny plant is no more cooperative in supporting itself and growing on its own than my child. How do you take care of dozens and dozens of tulsis?

After all this cleaning, washing and gardening, you go to the river for a bath and what happens? Some disgruntled bhakta keeps spitting on you every time you finish your bath

and step out of the river as in the case of Ekanath.

When you come home just as you are about to eat, god comes as unexpected guest. Often, he is even more choosy and demanding and asks for meat curry (Siruthonda Nayanar) when all you have is a little rice for yourself. He's not content with the offered food; he even wants your wife's jewellery (Purandaradasa and Villiputhurar) behind your back.

If you thought JIIT, SAT, GMAT, MCAT, etc were tough tests, try BBT (Bhagavan's Bhakti Test).

1. He wanted not just one but both eyes (Kannappa Nayanar)
2. Insisted on his devotee to avoid conjugal life (Thiruneelakanda Nayanar)
3. Made Meera to drink poison (if you thought garlic was bad enough).
4. Robbed Jnana Sambandar of all his possessions.

This is for ordinary devotees. Then there is the APT (advanced placement test) if you think you have a special relationship with God. Sundarar who thought he was God's special child was made an indentured servant and humiliated in front of public. Notwithstanding that, he was made blind too later on. Appar got a triple special: Intolerable stomach pain, sunk in river with a stone tied around his waist, and tossed in a liquid limestone vat.

If you pass all this and still follow bhakti, he appears not to the devotee who has been doing all this tapas but to his wife and serves her. He removes the thorn from her feet and massages her feet while totally ignoring the devotee (Tukaram).

I am wondering whether I can tread the path

of Bhakti Marga.

As a jnani, I can do as I please. After all Namadev's guru was lying down with his legs resting on the Siva Lingam. A bhakta is expected to lead a life of simplicity and poverty. Instead I can claim King Janaka as my role model and live in opulence if only I can afford it. A bhakta has to know by memory and recite all the sahasranamams (thousand names of God). It's with much difficulty I remember one name from swadhyaya group and how am I going to remember Sri Lalitha's thousand names? A jnani doesn't have to say any prayers after all.

A bhakta has to remember puranams, ithihasams etc and inspire devotion and wisdom when someone asks them questions

and seek guidance. A jnani has it a lot easier. All he/she has to know is six simple phrases and when to use them. When people ask for general advice just utter one of the four mahavakyas ( e.g. Tatvam asi). When the questions get really tough, use the brahmastram and ask like "who is this 'I' asking the question?". When all else fails, just silence the questioner with the admonition 'summa iru' (be quiet). For effect, after saying "summa iru", close your eyes and let your disciple explain to the questioner that you are demonstrating your dictum through action.

Oh My God! Once again my wife is repeating the same question. If you have the answer, please do write to me.



### TO THE STUDENTS

*There are times in a nation's history when Providence places before it one work, one aim, to which everything else, however high and noble in itself, has to be sacrificed. Such a time has now arrived for our Motherland when nothing is dearer than her service, when everything else is to be directed to that end. If you will study, study for her sake, train yourselves body and mind and soul for her service. You will earn your living that you may live for her sake. You will go abroad to foreign lands that you may bring back knowledge with which you may do service to her. Work that she may prosper. Suffer that she may rejoice. All is contained in that one single advice.*

*Sri Aurobindo*

### Vivekananda Kendra Samachar MANGALORE

88 students attended the 10-day Personality Development Camp held in April. Smt. Suguna Prabhu was the Chief Guest at the concluding programme. Another PDC was held for 8 days in which 8 participants were benefited. Two Deepa Poojas were conducted. 78 women took part in the Puja which was held on 25th April. 94 women attended the another pooja held on 20th.

Yoga class for Prisoners was conducted for 45 persons.

# BAL GANGADHAR TILAK ON SWAMI VIVEKANANDA



*It is doubtful if there is any Hindu who does not know the name of Sri Vivekananda Swami. There has been extraordinary advancement of material science in the nineteenth century. Under the circumstances, to present the spiritual science prevailing in India for thousands of years by wonderful exposition and then to kindle admiration and respect among the western scholars, and, at the same time, to create a sympathetic attitude for India, the mother of spiritual science, can only be an achievement of superhuman power. With English education, the flood of material science spread so fast that it required extraordinary courage and extraordinary genius to stand against that phenomenon and change its direction. Before Swami Vivekananda, the Theosophical Society began this work, but it is an undisputed fact that it was Swami Vivekananda who first held aloft the banner of Hinduism as a challenge against the material science of the West. . . It was Swami Vivekananda who took on his shoulders this stupendous task of establishing the glory of Hinduism in different countries across the borders. And he, with his erudition, oratorical power, enthusiasm and inner force, laid that work upon a solid foundation. . . Twelve centuries ago Sankaracharya was the only great personality, who not only spoke of the purity of our religion, not only uttered in words that this religion was our strength and wealth, not only said that it was our sacred duty to preach this religion in the length and breadth of the world--but also brought all this into action. Swami Vivekananda is a person of that stature – who appeared towards the last half of the nineteenth century.*

**Swamiji's Maha Samadhi Diwas falls on July 4th**

### LOKAMANYA BAL GANGADHAR TILAK

Very rarely do noble ideals, political intelligence, wisdom and a fiery fighting spirit come together as it did in Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Lokamanya Tilak, remains a central figure in the great movement to free India from British rule.

Born in Ratnagiri, Maharashtra in 1856, Tilak was a fierce patriot from his young days. He started two magazines – “Maratha” in English and “Kesari” in Marathi soon after his graduation. Kesari soon became the most widely read newspaper in India at the time. Through the editorials, Kesari spread the message of right to self-government and the non-interference of administration in Hindu religious affairs.



Tilak, working with the nationalists from Bengal, led the masses on the 4 point agenda: Boycott, Swadeshi, National Education and Arbitration. It was these ideals that were later taken up by Gandhiji in his efforts against the British. To help spread the ideas of nationalism and awaken the masses to national work, Tilak organized Ganesh Chaturthi festivals and Shiv Jayanti celebrations. Tilak also wrote a commentary on the Bhagavad Gita as relevant to society at the time to inspire people to nationalist ideals.

The attempt by the British to partition Bengal had an effect of jolting the Indian society out of slumber. Tilak led the people during this wave of nationalist fervor across the nation to fight for complete independence and nothing less. This, at a time when the 'Moderates' in Congress were not willing to ask for anything more than autonomy from the British. The 1907 Surat Congress was momentous: the 'Moderates' refusing to accept the ideals of complete independence forced the party to split into 2 factions – the “Extremists” (as they were called) fighting for purna swaraj, and the other “Moderate” faction willing to remain under the British crown.

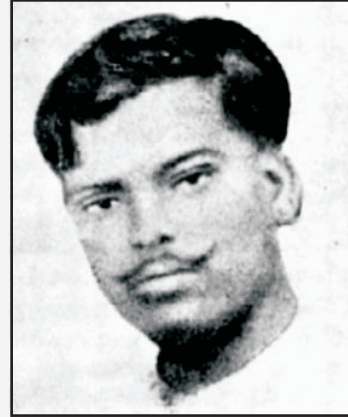
Tilak was imprisoned twice for his activities against the British, serving the second sentence of 6 years in the infamous kaala pani. It was after this conviction in the façade of a trial that he proclaimed: “In spite of the verdict of the Jury, I maintain that I am innocent. There are higher powers that rule the destiny of men and nations and it may be the will of providence that the cause which I represent may prosper more by my suffering than my remaining free”

His phrase “Swaraj is my birthright” will continue to ring in the hearts of Indians for ages to come.

## CHANDRASHEKHAR AZAD

So obsessed with fighting for freedom was this man, that he called himself 'Azad'. This revolutionary inspired many to fight against British colonialism, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

Chandrashekhari Tiwari was born on July 23, 1906 in Bhawra village, in M.P. to Pandit Sitaram Tiwari and Jagrani Devi. He received his first punishment at the age of fifteen. Chandra Shekhar was caught while indulging in revolutionary activities. When the magistrate asked him his name, he said "Azad" (meaning free). Chandrashekhari Azad was sentenced to fifteen lashes. With each stroke of the whip the young Chandrasekhar shouted "Bharat Mata Ki Jai". From then on Chandrashekhari assumed the title of Azad and came to be known as Chandrashekhari Azad. Chandrashekhari Azad vowed that he would never be arrested by the British police and would die as free man.



Chandrashekhari Azad belonged to a generation which was totally disillusioned with the results of the Non-cooperation movement led by Gandhi. Chandrashekhari Azad was deeply troubled by the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre in Amritsar in 1919. He was not opposed to violence to free the motherland and committed himself to complete independence by any means possible. He became most popular for the Kakori train robbery in 1925, the attempt to blow up the Viceroy's train and for the killing of the Assistant Superintendent of Police, John P. Saunders in 1928. Azad and his fellow freedom fighters were known to target police officers and administrators who were oppressive against the ordinary people, and those who harmed or tortured other revolutionaries. Along with Bhagat Singh and other revolutionaries like Sukhdev and Rajguru, Chandrashekhari Azad formed the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA).

Chandrashekhari Azad was a terror for British police. He was on their hit list and the British police badly wanted to capture him dead or alive. On February 27, 1931 Chandrashekhari Azad met two of his comrades at the Alfred Park Allahabad. He was betrayed by an informer who had informed the British police. The police surrounded the park and ordered Chandrashekhari Azad to surrender. Chandrashekhari Azad fought alone valiantly and killed three policemen. But finding himself surrounded and seeing no route for escape, Chandrashekhari Azad shot himself. Thus he kept his pledge of not being caught alive.

**Let us Celebrate the Jayanthi of these two great souls which falls on 23rd July**

# THE NARMADA PARIKRAMA

(Clockwise Circumambulation of the River Narmada )

K.K.VENKATRAMAN

4

## Sailing by boat

Although we, the Parikramavasis were in anxiety, both the boatmen were calm and unperturbed. This was nothing unusual for them. After some time, the wind turned favourable, the waves weakened and the boat started moving forward safely.

Around noon, the boatmen told us to offer the coconut and the piece of cloth (these are supplied free by some shopkeepers to the Parikramavasis), which we were having, to the sea. We were carrying the bottle containing Narmada water collected at the source, before starting the Parikrama. We poured out some water from the bottle into the sea and collected the sea water in the bottle in which the source water was already there (on reaching the source of Narmada, some water from this mixture of source water and sea water is to be poured into Narmada at the source and the source water is again collected to fill the half empty bottle). On completion of Parikrama, this water the mixture of source water, sea water and again source water is to be offered to the Shivling at Omkareshwar.

Although the Omkareshwar Temple is on the Narmada, the Parikramavasis cannot visit the Temple during the Parikrama, as it is located on a loop of sand formed at the confluence of a tributary (River Kaveri) with Narmada. The Temple is surrounded by Narmada waters and hence Parikramavasis who should not cross Narmada waters cannot visit the Temple during the Parikrama.

The Parikrama is considered to have been completed only after the offering of water to the Shivling at Omkareshwar, as in the case of the pilgrimage to Kashi which is considered to have been completed only after offering Ganga water at Rameswaram on return from Kashi.

We sailed, sailed and sailed and reached the North Bank at 7 pm. The boatmen told us that sometimes it would take 12 to 15 hours of sailing from South Bank to North Bank. We were not unfortunate, as it took us only 10 hours. During the sailing of 10 hours, no food, no water and no easing!



## **A Rare Meeting**

It is rare to find people from Tamilnadu doing Narmada Parikrama. It is also rare to find Tamilian Monks in the Ashrams on the banks of Narmada. While passing through Garudeshwar (Day 72) in Gujarat, I visited the Dattatreya Ashram and offered my pranams to an elderly monk there. After enquiring about me, he said that his mother tongue was also Tamil. He was very happy and said that he is meeting for the first time, a Tamilian doing Parikrama.

He offered bhiksha and when I was taking leave, he told me to meet his pre-monastic relatives in Chennai, when I visit that place and gave the address. After completing the parikrama, when I visited Chennai, I met his relatives and they were very happy to hear the news of the Swamiji.

I wrote to the Swamiji informing him about the completion of my Parikrama and visiting his relatives in Chennai and he promptly replied conveying his blessings.

## **When greed goes, Nature's abundance flowers**

The parikramavasis, deposit their belongings with a person in the last village on the south bank before entering the forest area, as items in their possession are taken away by the local tribals in the forest. This person renders free service by keeping the items safely. A small tag with the name and permanent address of the Parikramavasi is attached to the items. When the Parikramavasis reach the point on the North Bank opposite to this village, they can have their items collected by sending a chit through the boatman of the North Bank South Bank ferry service. The Parikramavasis deposit their mat, bed sheet, cooking vessels, water can etc., for safekeeping.

When the Parikramavasis come out of the forest in Gujarat, they are normally in loincloth, as even the dhoti worn by them is taken away. So some charitable organizations and individuals provide dhotis, water cans and other essentials to the Parikramavasis when they come out of the forest. Fortunately for me, I did not lose my dhoti. But I was without bed sheet and mat. It was the peak of winter and the night temperature falls down to 5 Celsius. I used to cover my body with the dhoti worn by me, which was totally inadequate to provide the necessary protection from the cold weather. When I came out of the forest, I was offered dhotis which I did not accept as I already had the same with me.

In the Vadodara district of Gujarat there is a famous Ashram Nareshwar Ashrama on the North Bank of Narmada. This Ashram attracts rich Gujarati devotees from the cities of the State and also from Mumbai. Devotees visit this Ashram in large numbers, especially during vacation time. There are many guest rooms and the devotees stay comfortably and spend few days in the Ashram. The Head of the Ashram is Mouni Baba (a saint who observes silence and communicates with the devotees only through written or sign language) in the Ashram, whom the devotees deeply revere.

One forenoon I was passing through this Ashram and when I learnt about this Mouni Baba, I decided to visit this Ashram and receive the blessings of Mouni Baba. It was end December winter vacation time and devotees had thronged the Ashram in very large numbers. I had my bath in the river and joined the queue for the darshan of the Saint. When my turn came, I prostrated and introduced myself. He appeared surprised visibly (later I learnt from one of the Ashramites who was with the

Saint that they had not come across a person from South India doing Narmada Parikrama). The saint showed some signs; an Ashramite standing by his side brought a new dhoti and gave it to him. He wanted to present it to me. I told him politely in Hindi, "As I already have a dhoti, I do not need the same". Then the saint wrote, "What do you need?" on a slate in Gujarati which was translated into Hindi, by the ashramite. I requested for a bed sheet, in Hindi, which was conveyed to the saint. He looked at the ashramites, and when they told the saint, I could understand that, they had no bed sheet to offer me. I again prostrated and when I was about to take leave, one lady requested me to wait. She told something to the saint and went away. After a few minutes, she returned with a woolen blanket and handed it over to the saint who presented the same to me. The saint told me to have noon prasada (lunch) in the Ashram. Later I learnt that the lady was a staunch devotee of the ashram. She is from a rich family having their own business. The family had come from Mumbai to spend few days in the ashram. They were staying in the guest room. She was present when the saint was interacting with me. I needed a bed sheet. As the saint was not in a position to fulfill my need, she decided to give her own blanket.

As I was not greedy (I did not accept the dhoti which was offered to me as I already had one) I got a woolen blanket when I sought only a cotton bed sheet. Needless to mention that the blanket protected me from the cold winter nights and kept me warm.

When I had my belongings including my bed sheet collected from the south bank through a person who volunteered himself to sail to the other bank, and bring my belongings without expecting anything in return, just for the

pleasure of serving a parikramavasi, I presented the blanket to him. He was very happy; he was a poor man, who could not afford to buy a blanket.

### Meeting my Mumbai neighbour

One of my very close friends could meet me during my parikrama. He was working in Vadodara and was residing there with his family. Narmada flows through Vadodara district. Vadodara city is about 50 kms north from Narmada on the North Bank. When I was walking on the South Bank in Gujarat, I enquired and found out that Malsar Town on the North Bank is the convenient point for people from Vadodara desiring to have a dip in Narmada. There is a good blacktop road and the distance can be covered within 2 hrs by car. Malsar is about 120 kms from the Arabian Sea towards East. I calculated that after reaching the North Bank of the river (from the land's end on the South Bank one has to sail into the sea for some distance and cross over to the North Bank), it would take about 6 days for me to reach Malsar (as I covered an average of 20 kms a day).

On 18 December 1987, I was at a place on the South Bank. After reaching the last point on the South Bank, one has to wait till the number of parikramavasis wanting to go to the North Bank became at least 20. Sometimes one may have to wait for even 3 days till the group reaches the figure 20. Keeping this in mind, I worked out that it would take between 12 and 15 days for me to reach Malsar. So, I wrote to my friend in Vadodara that I would be passing through Malsar between 31 Dec 87 and 3 Jan 88 and that I would inform him the exact date after reaching the North Bank.

I reached the North Bank on the night of 26 Dec 1987. Next day I wrote to my friend that I expected to reach Malsar on 1 Jan. evening, would wait for him on 2 Jan. and would leave Malsar on 3 Jan. morning. I posted the letter in a village post office. Again on 29 Dec. I posted another letter from Bharuch (District Headquarters town) confirming the date reaching Malsar.

On 31 December 87, I was passing through Nareshwar Ashram on the bank of the river. I visited the Ashram and had my lunch there. All the devotees visiting the Ashram sit together in a big hall to have lunch. As I was having lunch, the person next to me was talking to his friend who was sitting next to him. From the conversation, I understood that he was working in Indian Oil at Vadodara and would be returning in the evening. My friend at Vadodara was also working for the same company. So I sent a note to my friend through this person who promised to hand over my note to my friend in the night itself at his residence as all of them resided in the same township.

I expected to reach Malsar on 1 Jan. by evening. But I reached the place in the noon itself. As my friend might come to this place next day, to meet me, I had to stay back. The previous day a thorn had pierced into my sole, and I had removed it. But the pain was persisting. I suspected that the tip of the thorn might have got embedded in the sole. So in the afternoon I went to the small charitable dispensary nearby and the medical attendant removed the tip of the thorn with the needle. There was some bleeding and he dressed the sole with antiseptic lotion and stuck a plaster. Next day around 9 am, my friend from Vadodara arrived by car along with his wife. They were surprised to see me

unshaven (for more than two months) and with unruly hair (as one should not apply oil). They had brought food and eatables and spent the day with me. Before departing in the evening, he enquired whether I would require some money. I told him that although I was a pauper, I felt like a millionaire as my desires were getting fulfilled. They understood what I meant. They wished me good luck and left for Vadodara.

### **The happy lasting response from the South Bank**

I had started my parikrama from the point of origin of Narmada at Amarkantak, walked along the south bank, upto the point of confluence with the Arabian Sea, crossed over to North Bank, and walked along the north bank up to the point of origin. While walking along the south bank, some people had requested me to send a message to them through the boatman, (Boat service between north and south banks is available at many places for the convenience of the villagers on both the banks), when I happened to reach the point on north bank, which is just across the river from their village on the south bank. They had given me the names of villages on the north bank. When I reached these villages on the north bank I used to send information through the boatman / ferry passengers to the people on the south bank. They invariably came and spent time with me. They used to bring food and other eatables. The people on the north bank were surprised to see the love and affection the South bank people had for me. However, they would tell the south bank people that they also extend hospitality to the Parikramavasis, referring to the food brought by them.

On one occasion, I sent a message to the South bank people through the boat man about my halting for the night on the North bank. They

sent a message informing me that they would come with my night food. They came after an hour. We all ate together and they spent the night with me. Next morning, after tea, as I was preparing to leave, they told me that they wanted to spend more time with me and requested me to stay there till noon. When I firmly expressed my inability to accede to their request, they walked with me for about 5 Kms and returned to their village on the South bank.

### **Hospitality cutting across religion**

On 2 occasions Muslims extended hospitality by offering food and tea. One evening I decided to halt at a village temple on the bank for the night. I kept my items in the temple and went to have a wash. I saw two persons dismounting from their horses along with some items. As I was returning after wash, I saw them feeding the horses. After recognizing me as a parikramavasi, one of them entered into a conversation with me. After knowing my background he told me, "We are yarn merchants. We carry the yarn on our horses and sell to the traders. We carry cooking utensils, buy ration and cook our own food. We halt for the night at a convenient place. Tonight we will be halting here. We know that parikramavasis live on bhiksha. We are now going to prepare tea. After having a wash, we will prepare our food. We will be very happy if you accept the food cooked by us. We will prepare only vegetarian items today". I was really taken by surprise and readily accepted their offer. They prepared tea and served me. Then they told me, "You please have your prayer in the temple. We will call you when the food is ready". I went to the temple and completed the prayer. After some time one of them invited me saying that the food was ready. When I went there, they spread a mat, and requested me to sit down. They brought one plate and a glass of

water and placed in front of me. When I enquired about their food, they said that they would have after feeding me. But I insisted that we should eat together. They agreed and we ate together. They told me, "We would not have dared to offer food to a parikramavasi, because they do not accept food, cooked by people from other religions. But during the conversation with you, we gathered the impression that you consider everybody as equal. Then we picked up the courage to make our offer to you. We are really very happy". I told them that I was also equally happy.

Then after food we had interesting discussion almost till midnight. I was surprised to learn about their knowledge of the Self. They were telling, "We may belong to different religions; and caste but our goals are the same. Even in day-to-day life, one should be kind to all beings, more so during parikrama. We are happy that, you were kind to us by giving us an opportunity to serve you". I was lacking in words to express my feelings. Then they said, "We would leave this place tomorrow morning after taking our breakfast. Please join us". I told them, "I generally start early morning and do not take breakfast". Then they said, "We would prepare tea early morning. Please have tea before leaving this place". I told them, "I would love to take tea before leaving." Next morning, I left the place after enjoying the tea offered by them.

On another occasion also, I had enjoyed the hospitality of a Muslim villager when I halted for the night in a village.

### **Forest Route North Bank**

As the parikramavasis have to pass through the forest area on the south bank, they have to

pass through the forest area on the north bank also. While on the south bank, the forest area lies in M.P. and Maharashtra, on the north bank, the forest area lies in Gujarat and M.P. The distance to be covered through the forest on the south bank is almost 90 Kms and on the north bank about 70 Kms. Some parikramavasis avoid the forest route on the north bank and take the circuitous route around the hills by bus. I decided to take the traditional forest route and to cover it all alone.

At places, there are small hills in the forest and river flows through the valley formed by the hills on either bank of the river. The local people live in huts in the hamlets on the hills.

One forenoon, as I was walking along the river through this forest route. I heard someone shouting. When I looked up, I saw a young man coming down the hill and communicating to me in sign language to stop. I stopped walking and waited for him with the suspicion that he wanted to take away whatever he could from me. Although, I was not unhappy to part with whatever he wanted, I had the fear of losing the woolen blanket gifted to me, as I would not be able to protect myself from the biting cold during the nights without the blanket.

*(to be continued)*



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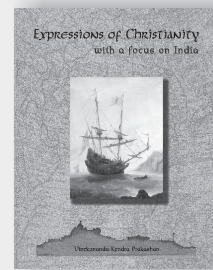
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## BOOK REVIEW

# TAPOVANA TAPASVI

**Author: Siddhanta Tulasi**

**Pages : 515**

Revered Swami Childbhavanandaji Maharaj of Sri Ramakrishna Tapovanam, Tirupparaithurai, Tiruchi has left the stamp of his Spiritual ministry on the minds of thousands of people. Spiritual teacher, institution builder, organizer, educator journalist, writer and publisher, the Revered Swamiji proved to the world, if proof was necessary, that to the knower of Atman all arts and sciences come spontaneously.

If the Rev. Swamiji's work was monumental in its dimensions, the timing of his advent on the Tamil Nadu horizon was most opportune. When some sections of Tamil Nadu, were being torn apart by the forces of atheism and materialism, the Benign Swamiji appeared on the scene and carried out his work as a True Karma Yogi.

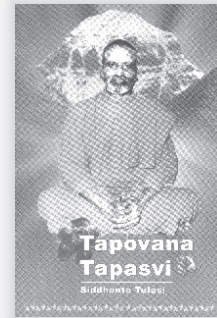
A detailed biography of Rev. Swamiji in English was overdue. Immediately after the Mahasamadhi of Rev. Swamiji in 1987, the monks of Tapovanam brought out a Tamil Biography "Paraithurai Mevia Paramapurushar"

Now Dr. K. Subrahmaniam under the assumed name of Siddhanta Tulasi has wielded his facile pen to write a detailed biography of the Swamiji.

Dr. Subrahmaniam is eminently suited to write on Swamiji Maharaj. He has spent three decades under the benign gaze of the Swamiji and has watched the Master work on large canvasses as well as minute sketches. He has served as Swamiji's instrument in his educational experiments.

All this experience has helped the author to portray, Swamiji and chronicle his manifold achievements spread over nearly five decades.

Swamiji was an institution by himself. He has revived a number of institutions which would not have lived today but for his timely intervention. Swamiji's role as an educator, especially in opening the doors of Higher education to Hindu women is truly historical. His gurukula system of schools will be remembered by a grateful nation. His unique spiritual training camps called Antar Yogam, brought religion and spirituality to the modern busy world. In the true tradition of our Rishis,



Swamiji used to welcome questions on spirituality and practicality and answer them with his inimitable simplicity and clarity. It is not surprising that these questions and answers have been noted down and published in a series of small volumes.

Among the Swamiji's many gifts to humanity is his magnum opus The Bhagawad Gita commentary. A Bank officer - devotee of Swamiji in Delhi, a true Ekalavya, in that he has never met Swamiji in person, used to keep a number of copies of Swamiji's annotated Bhagawad Gita and gift a copy to any budding student of philosophy. That was his life's mission. If Swamiji has lighted up a number of lives through his inspiration, half the work was done by his writing. Naturally this gaint of saint and his work called for a detailed Biography. This volume serves that need.

There are many lucky coincidences in the case of this book. Swami Omkaranandaji Maharaj, the disciple of Swamiji Chidbhanandaji, has established an Ashram at Theni in his Guruji's name and the Ashram has published the book!

Swami Dayananda Saraswati Maharaj has blessed this book, explaining the importance of Swamiji Chidbhanandaji's role in propagating Sri Ramakrishna's teachings and Hindu philosophy in Tamil Nadu at an appropriate slot in history.

Printed in bold, readable letters in quality paper, the book carries a number of welcome photographs of Swamiji Maharaj. This book is a 'MUST' for every devotee, Sadhaka, Karmayogi and every true Well-wisher of man-kind.

Copies can be had from:

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*N.Krishnamoorti*

